

Santa Cruz County Local Drought Impact Group (LDIG)
Meeting Highlights
September 28, 2006
Nogales, AZ

Welcome and Introductions: Opening Remarks

Louis Chaboya, Santa Cruz County Emergency Manager

- *Flooding does not end drought:* Winter rains provide more infiltration & groundwater recharge than summer rains which are more characteristic of higher volumes in a shorter time period with limited infiltration. Drought concerns continue in Santa Cruz County since the summer monsoons overall did not provide much hydrologic relief.

Karen Smith, Arizona Department of Water Resources

- Arizona is a national leader in terms of drought preparedness, only 4 states have dedicated programs for drought planning, Arizona is the only state that has both a program and a drought coordinator. ADWR appreciates the participation and the efforts of the group. The Department is committed to making sure Arizona is prepared for drought.

Impacts:

Gregg Garfin, CLIMAS asked the attendees to briefly describe local impacts that they are seeing either from the drought or recent rains.

Answers:

Sherry Sass, Friends of the Santa Cruz River

- Tree die off due to declining water tables
- Seems like fish are gone (including an endangered species) due to high levels of nitrogen in effluent
- The river jumped channel

Alejandro Barcenas, Arizona Department of Water Resources (ADWR)

- 20 ft. increase in wells; wells dry up and refill quickly
- Not a lot of buffer for long-term – storage problems
- Drought should be considered as naturally occurring in our arid environment
- Lost wells from bank erosion due to river jumping channel

Matt Killeen, The Nature Conservancy (TNC) - Patagonia

- Spotty nature of monsoons
- ½ dozen wells increased by 1 foot
- Surface water decreased, habitat diversity decreased (4 species previous; now 1)
- Preferred habitat for Gila topminnow declining

Randy Heiss, Town of Patagonia

- Parker Lake – trees dying off
- 5% – 50% die off depending on area
- Recommends photo documentation

Dan Bell, Natural Resource Conservation District (NRCD) & Rancher (agricultural impacts)

- Things have not recuperated back to pre1995 status
- During drought – unable to distribute water for ag
- Rains were beneficial, however, 2 miles of road washed out and pipes

Mike Hollister, Arizona Game & Fish Department (AGFD)

- Anticipating decreased fawn recruitment, however will quantifiably know the numbers in January when the big game surveys are conducted

David Toll, Farm Service Agency (FSA)

- Spoke with 14 ranchers in Cochise regarding impacts – mostly due to heavy rains where the dirt tanks were washed out
 - Ranchers cannot get loans for this – loans are for fencing and wind mills, etc.
- Did not hear from any ranchers in Graham or Greenlee; Santa Cruz unknown
- No emergency loans requested from any counties
- Unfortunately, there is quite a bit of lag time from the time the drought impacts occur to the time when a rancher may receive funds

Weather Update:

Gregg Garfin, CLIMAS

- Well levels are increasing – bought us time to do drought planning
- The west side of the county did not get summer rains
- El Niño starting to brew – brings wet/cool conditions and is increasing our chances of a wet winter (resulting in increased groundwater recharge and less pumpage)
- Strong or weak El Niño usually results in lots of precipitation

Drought Agricultural Impacts:

Dean Fish, UofA Cooperative Extension

- Beef Cattle is 98% of agricultural cash receipts in Santa Cruz County
- Forage produced from warm season grasses from July through September
- Perennials also need winter rains
- Drought results in: less nutrition for cows = less calves; may also result in the need for supplemental irrigation

Santa Cruz County Flood Mitigation Plan:

Louis Chaboya, Santa Cruz County Emergency Manager

- Santa Cruz County Flood Mitigation Plan addresses drought but not comprehensively.
- Drought planning portion needs to be focused on “preparedness” not “responsiveness”

Review of Co-Chairs & Workgroups:

Louis Chaboya, Santa Cruz County Emergency Manager

- Louis noted that there were no applicants for the co-chair positions; Louis and Dean Fish will assume these two positions, since the *Arizona Drought Preparedness Plan* requests that the University of Arizona Cooperative Extension and the County Emergency Management Office take the lead on county drought preparedness

Break out Session for Work Groups:

The following list represents those that volunteered to join the following work groups: (not all persons listed attended this meeting)

Monitoring:

Jeffrey Cooper, La Semilla
 Matt Killeen, The Nature Conservancy
 Dan Bell, Natural Resource Conservation District
 Randy Heiss, Town of Patagonia
 John Hays, Santa Cruz County Flood Control District

Outreach & Education:

Jim Notestine, Sonoita Crossroads Community Forum
 David Toll, Farm Service Agency
 Dana Lindsey, Santa Cruz County Emergency Management
 Sandra Eriksen, Santa Cruz County Emergency Management
 Diana Corrales, Santa Cruz County Board of Realtors

Mitigation:

Sherry Sass, Friends of the Santa Cruz River
 Jeffrey Cooper, La Semilla
 Louis Chaboya, Santa Cruz County Emergency Manager
 Dean Fish, U of A Cooperative Extension

Comments from Breakout Session:

- Video conferencing can be made available
- Online collaboration & discussion can be developed
- Data collection and its distribution should be further discussed; it was mentioned that data collected could possibly funnel through John Hays of Santa Cruz County Flood Control District

- Santa Cruz Active Management Area (AMA) – will be installing 7-8 transducers; data may be posted on the internet
- Gregg Garfin asked the Monitoring Workgroup what they would like to see come back from the State Drought Monitoring Technical Committee. The Monitoring Workgroup wants to see the impact data put into “drought categories” so that appropriate response measures can be implemented
- Data from ADEQ for the Santa Cruz River goes back to 1991
- Drought Impact Reporting (online tool) is a site to input qualitative data collection
- Mitigation & Response Workgroup would like to study what it would take to promote conservation and reduce water usage in the agricultural community
- Should conduct an assessment of how water providers in Santa Cruz County will manage water supplies in times of drought or shortages
- Ask Mike Crimmins to present information on Rainlog to the NRCDs
- Education & Outreach Workgroup will focus on press releases in the near term
- Investigate the possibility of a listserve
- ADWR – will send the monthly Drought Monitor Reports out to Santa Cruz County LDIGs
- ADWR – will post meeting highlights for this meeting on the web including presentations from Gregg Garfin and Dean Fish
- Stations in Santa Cruz County give humidity and rain data which may be beneficial as a drought indicator
- Group would like the ability to post photos on impact reporter website

Next Meeting & Agenda:

- Marjie Risk, Statewide Water Conservation Office, ADWR, will be asked to present information on conservation mitigation; ask Marjie to discuss funding sources for installing low-flow fixtures; or funding to investigate where water losses are occurring
- Reports/updates will be presented from the Workgroup meetings
- Next meeting will be scheduled for January